

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ABU DH 00708 081148Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----081219Z 070763 /23 10
R 081120Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5746

S E C R E T ABU DHABI 0708

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, TC, US
SUBJ: UAE REQUEST FOR TOW'S

REF: (A) STATE 11164, (B) ABU DHBI 156.

1. SUMMARY: LACK USG RESPONSE TO UAE REQUEST FOR TOW'S HAS BEEN RAISED AGAIN. UAE HOPES THAT IN APPLYING RESTRAINT IN ARMS SALES, USG WILL KEEP IN PERSPECTIVE THAT UAE REQUEST IS SMALL AND NOT FOR SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SYSTEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING MAY MARCH 7 CALL ON SHAIKH SULTAN, UAEDF COMMANDER OF WESTERN REGION AND SECOND SON OF SHAIKH ZAYID, HE RAISED QUESTION OF CONTINUED LACK OF RESPONSE BY USG TO UAEG REQUEST FOR TOW'S. HE WAS AWARE THAT HIS OLDER BROTHER, SHAIKH KHALIFA, HAD RAISED THE MATTER WITH ME PREVIOUSLY (REF B). I TOOK THIS OCCASION TO USE GUIDANCE CONTAINED IN REF A, STATING THAT US CONTINUES TO HAVE UAEG REQUEST UNDER SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION BUT THAT NO DECISION CAN BE EXPECTED UNTIL NEW ADMINISTRATION HAS HAD OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW OVERALL US ARMS SALES POLICY TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES. IN VIEW OF UNANIMOUS SFRC RESOLUTION OF PREVIOUS CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC PLEDGE TO SEEK TO REDUCE ARMS SALES ABROAD, I INDICATED THAT ALL FUTURE ARMS SALES COULD BE EXPECTED TO UNDERGO AN EVEN MORE GIGOROUS REVIEW IN ACCORDANCE WITH VERY STRICT
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CRITERIA. ANTICIPATING THAT THIS MATTER WOULD BE RAISED BY SHAIKH SULTAN, I ALSO READ TO HIM THE USINFO ACCOUNT (DTG 052016Z MARCH 77) OF THE PRESIDENT'S MARCH 4 MEETING WITH A GROUP OF AMERICAN PUBLISHERS, WHERE THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED HIS VIEW THAT USG HAD SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS THE WORLD'S LARGEST ARMS SUPPLIER TO INDUCE MIDDLE EASTERN AND OTHER COUNTRIES TO CUT DOWN ON QUANTITY OF ARMS THEY BUY.

3. SULTAN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD NEW ADMINISTRATION'S CONCERN OVER ARMS ESCALATION. HE HOPED, HOWEVER, THAT USG WOULD KEEP ITS SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE. THE AVAILABILITY OF MILITARY SUPPLIES FROM US FOR ANOTHER COUNTRY, LIKE UAE, IMPLIED THAT AN ELEMENT OF TRUST EXISTED BETWEEN BOTH COUNTRIES AND THAT THE US WAS INTERESTED IN THE SECURITY AND STABILITY OF THAT COUNTRY. HE HOPED THAT IN APPLICATION OF ITS ARMS SALES POLICY, US DID NOT EXPECT THAT COUNTRIES LIKE UAE SHOULD HAVE NO MILITARY CAPABILITY AT ALL. UAE DID, AFTER ALL, HAVE SOMETHING OF GREAT VALUE TO PROTECT WHICH WAS NOT ONLY VITAL TO ITS OWN ECONOMY BUT TO THE ECONOMY OF THE WORLD AT LARGE. UNLESS US WAS HOLDING A GRUDGE AGAINST THE UAE, IT WAS NOT REALISTIC TO DENY ACCESS TO EQUIPMENT NEEDED TO ASSURE MINIMAL SECURITY. WHILE UAE WAS NOT FACED WITH ANY DIRECT THREAT NOW, NO ONE COULD SAY THAT SITUATION WOULD BE FEW YEARS HENCE. HE ASSUMED THAT IF SOME INCIDENT SHOULD OCCUR IN THE FUTURE, EITHER WITHIN THE EMIRATES OR WITHOUT, WHICH THREATENED INTERNAL SECURITY OF UAE, US WOULD WELCOME UAE BEING CAPABLE OF MUSTERING SOME DETERRENT EVEN THOUGH IT WOULD PROBABLY ALSO HAVE TO DEPEND ON OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE FROM FRIENDLY COUNTRIES.

4. IN MY RESPONSE, I ASSURED SHAIKH SULTAN THAT WE BEARING NO GRUDGE AGAINST UAE AND REVIEWED FOR HIM HISTORY OF LOWER GULF ARMS SALES POLICY WHICH HAD BEEN APPLIED SINCE 1972. SHAIKH SULTAN SAID THAT UAE WAS AWARE OF THIS POLICY FROM EARLIER MEETINGS WITH AMBASSADOR STERNER. HOWEVER, HE ARGUED THAT TOW'S WERE NOT CONSIDERED TO BE SOPHISTICATED
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WEAPON, DID NOT REQUIRED PRESENCE OF AMERICAN PERSONNEL, WERE PURELY DEFENSIVE IN NATURE, AND DID NOT POSE A THREAT TO ANYONE. NEITHER DID HE BELIEVE THAT SALE OF TOW'S TO UAE SHOULD BE PUT IN SAME CATEGORY AS SALE OF HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT TO ISRAEL, IRAN OR SAUDI ARABIA. ALL UAEDF WANTED WAS BASIC MODERN ANTI-TANK MISSILE FOR ITS NOW INTEGRATED DEFENSE FORCE.

5. COMMENT: SULTAN OBVIOUSLY HAD BEEN CAREFULLY COACHED AND MANY OF HIS POINTS HAVE BEEN MADE BEFORE BY OTHER UAE OFFICIALS BUT ARE CONVEYED AGAIN TO GIVE IDEA OF IMPORTANCE WHICH UAE MILITARY LEADERSHIP PLACES ON THIS ITEM. THERE APPEARS BE GENUINE CONCERN THAT US UNWILLINGNESS TO SELL WHAT THEY BELIEVE IS NON-SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SYSTEM IMPLIES SOMEHOW THAT THERE IS LACK OF TRUST BY USG THAT EMIRATES CAN HANDLE WEAPON IN RESPONSIBLE FASHION AND THAT US REALLY NOT INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING UAE INTERNAL SECURITY AND INTEGRATION OF ARMED FORCES.
DICKMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY SALES, MISSILES
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Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ABUDH00708
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770079-0405
Format: TEL
From: ABU DHABI
Handling Restrictions:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770384/aaaacvxu.tel
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Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 11164, 77 ABU DHABI 156
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26-Oct-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3182745
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UAE REQUEST FOR TOW'S
TAGS: MASS, TC, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d53d81bc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009